

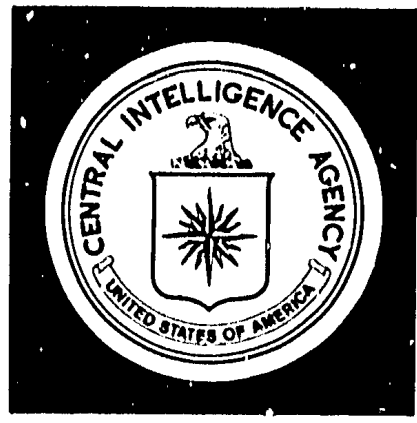
Declassified in Part -  
Sanitized Copy Approved for  
Release 2012/05/30 :  
CIA-RDP85T00875R001100010

Declassified in Part -  
Sanitized Copy Approved for  
Release 2012/05/30 :  
CIA-RDP85T00875R001100010

**Secret**



25X1



**LOAN COPY**  
**Return to DSB**  
**JHI107, Hq.**

*Developments in Indochina*

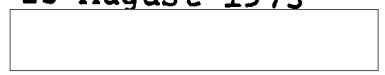
25X1



**Secret**

25X1

**173**  
**23 August 1973**



*AM 4/9*

**Page Denied**

*Developments in Indochina*



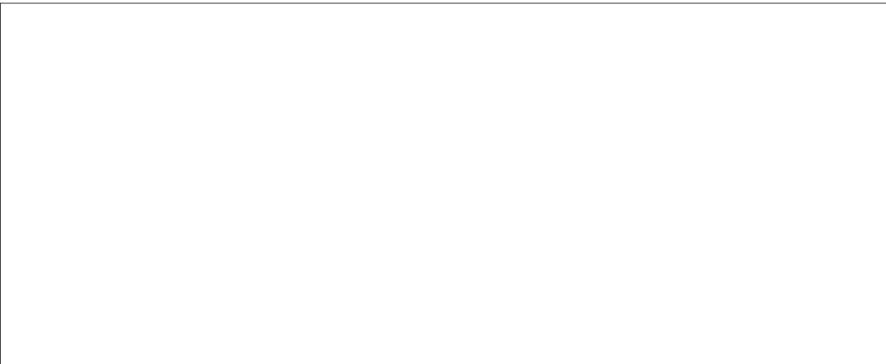
25X1

**CONTENTS**

23 August 1973

CAMBODIA . . . . . 1

Kompong Cham, the third largest city in Cambodia, may become a major test for the government's ability to resist Khmer insurgent attacks. Elements of as many as ten battalions have overrun outlying positions around the city. There does not appear to be any evidence suggesting that the insurgents plan a sudden thrust against the city, however, and while an insurgent siege is likely, Kompong Cham does not seem to be in imminent danger of collapse.



25X1

SOUTH VIETNAM. . . . . 4

The Senate election next Sunday still seems certain to result in an impressive victory for the Thieu government. A number of South Vietnamese military

25X1

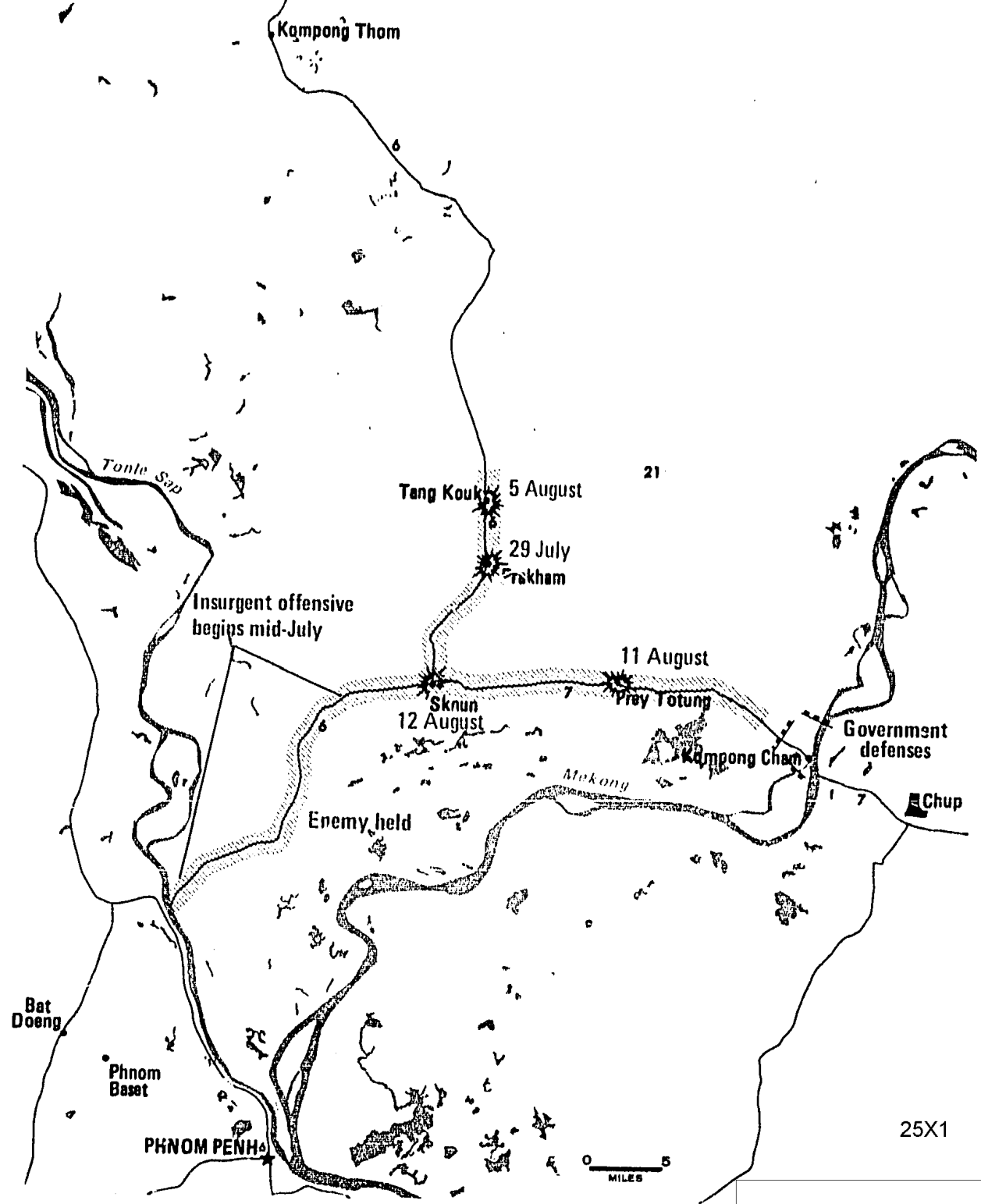
commanders have been complaining recently to US observers about equipment problems and personnel complications that they claim have severely limited the combat effectiveness of government fighting units.

LAOS . . . . . 7

After he clears away the fallout from the abortive coup effort of General Ma, Souvanna will almost certainly move very quickly to exploit the incident in order to urge a speedy end to right-wing indecision and opposition to a final Lao settlement.

23 August 1973

**CAMBODIA: Kompong Cham**



554535 8-73 CIA

CAMBODIA

25X1

Kompong Cham--A Preliminary Bout

While the threat to Phnom Penh has captured the headlines in the past few weeks, Khmer insurgent forces northeast of the capital have been methodically closing in on Kompong Cham, Cambodia's third largest city. During the past week, elements of as many as ten insurgent battalions--supported by captured 105-mm. howitzers--overran outlying positions around Kompong Cham and threatened to close the airfield. The city's 5,000 to 6,000 defenders are now bracing for attacks against a perimeter at one point less than a mile from the city's outskirts.

Located on the Mekong River some 45 miles above Phnom Penh, Kompong Cham has been bypassed by the war for the past two years. It was threatened by Vietnamese Communist forces in 1970, but until recently things have been so quiet there that provincial officials were suspected of having reached an accommodation with the insurgents. Fighting began to move closer to Kompong Cham in June, however, as insurgent forces west of the city launched an offensive along Route 6, quickly cutting off overland access to Kompong Cham. The Communists have had easy going since then as government positions along the highways leading to Kompong Cham from the west collapsed in rapid succession between 29 July and 12 August in the face of only moderate insurgent pressure. Along the way, the enemy captured significant quantities of supplies and ammunition along with as many as eight 105-mm. howitzers.

Although major enemy forces have moved into the immediate Kompong Cham area only in the past week, they appear to be using the same tactics as their compatriots around Phnom Penh. In an apparent effort to wear down government strength, the insurgents

23 August 1973

25X1

launched conventional attacks against Kompong Cham's western defense line. There has been little evidence of plans for a sudden thrust into the city itself, and, while an insurgent siege is likely, Kompong Cham does not appear to be in imminent danger of collapse. Whether by design or accident, the insurgents' move against Kompong Cham is paying the added dividend of weakening government strength around Phnom Penh. Alarmed by the deteriorating situation to the north-east, army commanders in Phnom Penh have moved over 800 troops from the capital's defenses and sent them to Kompong Cham. Another 300 reinforcements will be flown north in the next few days.

25X1

25X1

23 August 1973

-2-

25X1



**Page Denied**

25X1

SOUTH VIETNAM

25X1

Government Set for Election Sweep

The Senate election next Sunday still seems certain to be an impressive victory for the Thieu government. Four slates of candidates are competing for 31 of the Senate's 60 seats. The slate receiving the most votes will elect 16 members and the runner-up slate will elect 15. A slate composed of members of President Thieu's Democracy Party and one headed by former foreign minister Tran Van Lam, also closely identified with the government, are heavily favored.

The two non-government slates consist of little-known individuals persuaded to enter the race in order to give an appearance of competition. One of these slates, however, has brightened an otherwise lack-luster campaign by demonstrating considerable vigor, and while its prospects of winning are poor, it could cut into the government's victory margin. The slate has focused on economic and financial issues, while attacking government corruption and inefficiency. It also has complained that the government is hampering its campaign.

Despite the apparent certainty of the outcome, Thieu and his advisers are taking no chances and are running a tightly controlled campaign. The candidates have been allowed only relatively limited contacts with the voters and with the press. Thieu reportedly wants a clear pro-government majority in the Senate, which has been almost evenly divided between pro- and anti-government forces, so that he can strengthen his position through constitutional amendments. Moreover, the government wants to ensure a high turnout to demonstrate its strength and presence throughout the country.

25X1

23 August 1973

25X1

25X1

It seems unlikely that either the Communists or organized non-Communist opposition groups will make a major effort to disrupt the Senate election or to embarrass the government. Reports from scattered areas indicate that some Viet Cong cadre will try to persuade voters not to go to the polls or to cast blank ballots if they are forced to vote. Similar reports have cropped up before almost all recent national elections, but the balloting has generally proceeded without interruption in most areas. The government reportedly believes that some An Quang Buddhist leaders are trying to persuade their followers not to take part in the election. The Buddhists and other opposition groups chose not to run candidates in the election, however, and there is little sign that they are doing much to block the government's efforts to dominate the polls.

25X1

25X1

Government Combat Weaknesses--  
Real or Imagined?

25X1

A number of South Vietnamese military commanders have complained recently to American observers that materiel "shortages" and personnel "weaknesses" have severely limited the combat effectiveness of government fighting units. Among the problems cited most frequently are shortages of fuel, ammunition, spare parts, and maintenance personnel, as well as high food prices and a general reluctance to continue fighting since the cease-fire agreement. Some commanders have suggested that these weaknesses could undermine the government's capability to contain a major military effort by the Communists.

Shortages of one kind or another do exist throughout the South Vietnamese armed forces, but some commanders appear to be overstating the seriousness of the situation. The US defense attache's

23 August 1973

25X1

office in Saigon attributes the insufficiency of fuel, spare parts, and ammunition to poor internal distribution, but concedes that South Vietnam's air combat support units do lack adequate helicopter and maintenance personnel.

Claims of severe equipment shortages and personnel weaknesses are not supported by available information on the readiness of most South Vietnamese military units. In Military Region (MR) 1, for example, [redacted]

[redacted] the percentage of guns, armored personnel carriers, tanks, and trucks that are operational has generally averaged above 90 percent of the equipment on hand. In addition, there have been few instances where the number of ready-for-duty personnel in various ground units has slipped much below 75-80 percent of authorized strength. Information provided on MR-3 leads to similar conclusions.

The most serious problem currently confronting the armed forces appears to be food shortages, especially of rice in some areas. The attache concludes that food shortages have lowered morale in some units to the point that overall combat effectiveness has been reduced. Until recently, soldiers received a daily allotment of rice adequate to feed themselves and their families, but this has been replaced by a daily allotment of money that is not keeping pace with increases in the cost of rice. Consequently, many soldiers have been forced to work at other jobs during "on-duty" hours in order to get enough food.

Reluctance to fight is not easy to measure, but such an attitude appears to underlie the willingness of many units to reach local accommodations with the Communists. While such agreements are prohibited by Saigon, local commanders reportedly are finding it easier to look the other way and settle for a "live and let live" situation [redacted]

25X1

23 August 1973

LAOS

25X1

The Negotiations Game

After he clears away the fallout from the abortive coup effort of General Ma, Souvanna will almost certainly move quickly to exploit the incident in order to urge a speedy end to right-wing hesitation and opposition to a final Lao settlement.

The rightists, however, will probably continue to press Souvanna to extract further concessions from the Pathet Lao before signing the agreement to implement the February accord. The generals realize that so long as Souvanna has strong US backing they cannot hope to overthrow him, but are aware that Souvanna needs their support if he wishes any durable settlement with the Communists. Souvanna does not have to be reminded that the rightists helped undermine the coalition government formed in 1962 when they assassinated the pro-Communist foreign minister less than a year after he took up his post.

If he encounters sustained right-wing resistance and no agreement is signed, Souvanna will probably reaffirm his intention to resign later this month. This would serve two purposes: it would cause alarmed Western diplomats in Vientiane to put pressure on the rightists and would split rightist ranks between those who place their own interests above everything else and those who believe that Souvanna must remain as prime minister if there is to be any hope of eventual peace.

Souvanna has used this tactic several times in the past, but this time he seems ready to submit his letter of resignation to the King if opposition continues.

25X1

25X1

23 August 1973

25X1

**Page Denied**